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SUBJECT: ICELAND: GOVERNMENT HOLDS TIP SYMPOSIUM

¶1. (U) More than 100 people overflowed a conference room for a symposium on human trafficking sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights on October 30. Foreign Minister Ossur Skarphedinsson opened the symposium by declaring the GOI's unwavering support for the fight against human trafficking. He stressed that TIP was a top priority for the government. Noting that the GOI has already drafted and issued a national anti-TIP action plan, the Minister said ratifying the Palermo Protocol during the current parliamentary season was imperative.

¶2. (U) Another speaker, the Deputy Special Representative of the OSCE for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Ruth Pojman, complimented Icelandic authorities on drafting the national anti-TIP action plan and stressed the importance of implementing it. Representatives from the police department that handles Keflavik Airport, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, and a legal counsel from the NGO Intercultural Center also spoke at the symposium. Most of the speakers referred to the recent apprehension of a number of alleged traffickers as an example of how Iceland was stepping up its efforts in this area.

¶3. (U) Ms. Pojman came from Vienna for this event and a full day of meetings with key players in TIP in Iceland. She substituted at the last minute for her boss, Eva Biaudet, who was ill. After the symposium, Ms. Pojman told CDA that she was encouraged by the turnout and the conference and credited, at least in part, the U.S. TIP report with providing the impetus to move things forward in Iceland. She said she was too fully booked to meet with the Embassy during her stay, which would include a visit to a shelter as well as meetings with the range of stakeholders. The following day, Iceland's two major newspapers reported on the symposium with a full page spread.

¶4. (U) The audience included former Foreign Minister Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir, and a number of officials from various ministries (including the top legal advisor at the Foreign Ministry), representatives from NGOs and law enforcement. (Note: Gisladdottir is a candidate for the position of OSCE Special Representative for Combating TIP.) In addition, the Ambassadors from Finland, Sweden and Norway as well as Charge also attended the entire discussion.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: As the first TIP-related event of such magnitude ever held in Iceland, this symposium demonstrates the GOI's intention to step up the fight against TIP and make it a priority. The fight against TIP was on the backburner of Icelandic politics until this year when the first national anti-TIP action plan was drafted last March. The symposium coincided with two important TIP-related events, namely the court proceedings in the first ever TIP case in Iceland, and second, the recent revelation of a case involving the possible trafficking of a 19-year-old Lithuanian girl into prostitution in Iceland. The symposium is yet another development this year that will put the fight against TIP more firmly on the political radar in Iceland. End Comment.

WATSON